

## When Conversations Go Well

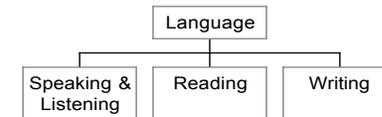
### Language Development in Reading Recovery

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## Language and Literacy



## Constructing and Composing

- Searching
- Selecting
- Rejecting
- Self-monitoring
- Self-correcting
- And extending the processing

*Lessons Designed for Individuals in Part One p. 3*

C: Um... the fox... he he um um...the the fox he...  
um the fox, farmer, farm...he he um gets the fox  
and then um the...he tricks the man, farmer and  
the fox gets a hen then and he went to um,  
M-M-M-Mr Fox

T: With the hen!

C: Yea. The h...The hen was...not, not the hen um...  
The fox got the hen and he took it to to the the fox the  
mother fox.

## A prediction of progress

*By the end of a lesson series the child's construction of messages should show an increase in syntactic complexity and some skilful packaging of ideas.*

*Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Part Two p. 56*

C: At my old house I was sleeping...  
 T: **Mmm**  
 C: a- a- like at the middle of the night or beginning...  
 T: **Yes**  
 C: And my sister had her first tooth or her second and I went inside her room and I...and I...took... and I pulled it...and I opened the pillow and...and  
 T: **Oh Jake!**  
 C: And I stole...I stole...my sister's money.  
 T: **Did she find out?**  
 C: No. She was still sleeping before I stole it.  
 T: **Oh**  
 C: And I put it under her pillow and then, then I was going to go, "Ahh, the tooth fairy came!"  
 T: **Now, what could you say about that in your story today?**  
 C: At the middle of the night I stole my sister's money from the tooth fairy, maybe her second tooth.

### The Social Context of Language Development

- Learning takes place through conversations without formal instruction
  - Different homes use language differently
    - Vocabulary
    - Structures
    - Dialects
    - Content
    - Interaction style
    - Exposure to different genres
    - Opportunities to talk
- (Clay, 1998, p. 239)

### *What is it in the adult's behaviour that fosters increased maturity in the child's language?*

Becoming Literate: The Construction of Inner Control p. 70

### Adult or Sibling?

Child: When Daddy home?  
 Mother: Daddy will be home in time for supper.

Child: When Daddy home?  
 Sibling: Supper time

### Adults



- In parent and child interactions language corrections are not common
- The parent responds to the content of the message and not the form of the message
- The parent expands or reformulates the child's meaning in a more mature form.



Children who were corrected frequently did not use more error-free language. Instead their language did not develop well, and they did not succeed to the same degree academically as children whose parents and others focused on understanding and extending the children's meaning.

Wells (1986) *The Meaning Makers*

## Supporting Language Development

When a child is trying to communicate, assume he or she has something important to say and treat the attempt accordingly.

C: Chasing fox look like that one

T: It does look like the same fox doesn't it.

## Supporting Language Development

Because the child's utterances are often unclear or ambiguous, be sure you have understood the intended meaning before responding.

C: My old daffodil lost.

T: Is it? What happened?

C: It lost its flower.

T: Its petals- these lovely parts here. Did it lose its petals?

C: No, it lost this (points)

T: Oh, I see, oh, okay the whole top comes off- the top of the flower.

## Supporting Language Development

When you reply, take the child's meaning as the basis for what you say next, confirming the intention and extending the topic or inviting the child to do so him or herself.

T: I didn't want the lion to eat the deer. What do you think about that?

C: He's too slow.

T: He is too slow.

C: He's too fat.

T: Do you think he's fat?

C: He's not (pointing to the deer). He's running.

T: I like the way you thought the lion was fat and couldn't get the deer.

## Supporting Language Development

Select and phrase your contributions so that they are at or just beyond the child's ability to comprehend.

T: They're [daffodils] yellow, aren't they. They're lovely.

C: I like yellow!

T: Daffodils are beautiful.

C: I like green and yellow daffodils.

T: Yes, so do I. They're always a beautiful yellow colour, daffodils.

C: And always this daffodil umm gots little tiny stuff.

## In Reading Recovery



- Children encounter manageable problems
- Teachers respond to the partially correct
- Teachers follow the child's lead

Johnston, 2007, *Journal of Reading Recovery*

## Record of Oral Language (LL2, p. 90)

What can we learn by looking closely at transcripts of children's substitutions, omissions and insertions on the *Record of Oral Language*?

Child One

Level 1 13/14

G He's playing his radio **really**/very loud.

Level 2 3/14

A **My**/That big dog over there is going to be my brother's.

B The boy by the pond was **good**/sailing -/his -/boat.

C The bird **flew at**/to the top of the tree.

The dog ran **right**/through **over**/the -/hole -/in the fence.

D **Dad**/The -/boy **was sawing**/saw what the man was doing to the car.

F **There's riding my baby pushing my chair**/There is the baby riding in his pushchair.

G My brother turned the radio up **really**/very loud.

Child Two

Level One: 14/14 Level 2 1/14

A That big dog - /over - /there is going to be my brother's.

That old truck - /in - /there used to be my father's.

B The boy by the pond was sailing **a**/his boat.

C The dog **went**/ran through -/the -/hole -/in the fence.

F There is my baby riding in **a**/his pushchair.

G The girl **went**/threw -/her -/book -/right across the room.

- As a preposition: ran *in* the house
- As an adverb: Come *in*
- As an adjective: the *in* thing to do
- As a noun: he has an *in* with the boss

*Webster's New Complete Dictionary*

### Last parts of speech to appear

- Prepositions (in, at, because, but, to)
- Articles (a, an, the)
- Conjunctions (and, or, because of, but)

Freeman & Freeman (2004) *Essential Linguistics*

When do children understand  
*here* and *there*?  
*this* and *that*?

### Jake's Record of Oral Language

Go **at**/to -/the doctors with your sister now!

### Jake's Composition

The little boy went at the pet shop and he bought a mouse.

## Implications for Teaching

- Engage in conversational discourse with a child
- Listen and respond to the meaning of his utterances
- Use your turn in the conversation to nudge the child to express his complete ideas more fully.

## Just-in-time language

C: He was running in the cage from the fruit.  
T: Was he?  
C: Yes.  
T: Oh I bet he ate it when you weren't looking. Didn't he?  
C: No! He was then he...he just...just went walking, walking, walking then...then he got...got...he was...try to go up but he couldn't.  
T: **He climbed up the cage!**  
C: Yes.  
T: Wow!  
C: Cause our cage is bigger, bigger and he climbs up and he...he jumps.

T: When I was looking at this picture it reminded me of what you were telling me about tubing when you were sliding down the hill. Did it look like that?  
C: U huh  
T: **Tell me about it.**  
C: We we...we we all had to go...hold on to those things.  
T: **Did they have handles?**  
C: Yeah, and to, and to the other handle, and the other ones hold onto the other handles, and our friends came and the...and my mom and dad were right at the last and I was first.

### Composes:

We went at Blue Mountain and we went on tubes and we hold onto the handles three tries.

T: Do you want to make up an interesting story about a dinosaur...  
C: Maybe  
T: ...being hungry? We have a deadly python eating a wild hairy pig. What might a dinosaur eat?  
C: Every dinosaur I know would eat um meat is a wild one.  
T: The wild dinosaurs eat meat? What kind of meat do they like?  
C: All types.  
T: All types of meat.  
C: The other dinosaurs eat only grass  
T: Are you going to write about the ones that eat meat or the nice gentle ones that eat grass and leaves?  
C: The nice gentle ones.

### Composes:

There are different types of dinosaurs and the gentle ones are harmless.

## What can Reading Recovery teachers do to support language development?

- Personalize the conversation
- Invite children to talk more
- Ask for clarification if necessary
- Appropriate the child's utterance and reformulate in a more mature form while staying with the meaning of the child's message

C: At my old house I was sleeping...  
T: **Mmm**  
C: a- a- like at the middle of the night or beginning...  
T: **Yes**  
C: And my sister had her first tooth or her second and I went inside her room and I...and I...took...and I pulled it...and I opened the pillow and...and  
T: **Oh Jake!**  
C: And I stole...I stole...my sister's money.  
T: **Did she find out?**  
C: No. She was still sleeping before I stole it.  
T: **Oh**  
C: And I put it under her pillow and then, then I was going to go, 'Ahh, the tooth fairy came!'  
T: **Now, what could you say about that in your story today?**  
C: At the middle of the night I stole my sister's money from the tooth fairy, maybe her second tooth.



*Conversations with a child about a story... adds to the teacher's understanding of the reader in useful ways, and leads the child into discourse about stories.*

An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement p. 63

C: The part I like is when the dog gets chasen away, because I don't like other animals to chase him.

T: So the dog gets chased away and then what happens?

C: And then Tabby gets up the tree and he refuses to come down.

T: So?

C: So he...he stayed up there for...for a long while until he came down. Then Miss Green baked a fish.

T: Oh, they're having a good time, aren't they?

C: And Dad...this one is funny one. The water went all over Dad.

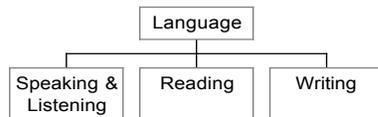
T: You know what's going to happen next.

C: Yeah. They all run and Dad went faster. Got you naughty monkeys!

T: Oh, that's what he called them.

C: Yeah and...Dad put them in the water.

## Language and Literacy



## Conversations about stories

Are opportunities for children to

- respond to stories
- construct their understandings of what they have read
- to appropriate the language of stories

Are opportunities for teachers to

- check on comprehension and expand language

Child: (refers to the pictures in the book)

And this one, the spider was hiding. The spider said, "It's so sticky." Then the spider hid in there. The fly came and he go in Mrs. Spider's web. After it's finished now Mrs. Spider look at the...her web and it was broken and she worked all night. In the morning it was all better again.

C: Fox Lox took them to the den.

T: Mm

C: "Well, well, well", said Fox Lox. And then here Fox Lox and there Fox Lox's den. Then the little squirrel call down, "Do not go there!" because Fox Lox will eat them. So they went as fast as they could and then back home. But they never tell the king that the sky is falling.

### Analysis of more common language

- Use of irregular verbs (go/went, do/did, is/was)
- Use objective pronoun (took *them*)
- Use of *this* as an adjective (*this* one)
- Use of *all* as an adverb (*all* over, *all* better) and as an adjective (They *all* run)
- Use of *there* as adverb (*there* is) and noun (Don't go *there*)
- Use of *her* as an adjective (*her* web)
- Use of the conjunction *because*
- Growing control over the definite article *the*

At the end of a series of lessons my Reading Recovery students need to have

- Gained greater flexibility with language construction
- Learned how to express their ideas more fully
- Reach out to more complex written language structures

### Types of teacher support

- Give invitations into open ended conversations
- Personalize conversations starting with what captures the child's interest
- Probe skillfully using genuine questions and comments to get the child to talk more
- Reformulate the child's utterances into more mature language
- Respond to the child's meaning and seeks clarification when necessary

*There are no quick ways to extend language but the best available opportunity for the Reading Recovery teacher lies in the conversations she has with the child in and around his lessons.*

*The authors of books she chooses for the child provide other opportunities for extending language. We know something has changed when we hear him construct part of a sentence in a new way.*

Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Part Two p. 51